

Jay Jordan #103
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Q: Mr. Jordan, when did you first join the Army?

A: Well, I was commissioned from Kelly Field in May 29th of '41, and so I went in as a cadet in October 12th, 1940 and that had ROTC and National Guard time before that so when you say when did I join the Army, it depends on what you mean.

Q: When did you first come to Hawaii?

A: I came to Hawaii after graduation from Kelly in July, 1941.

Q: What was your first assignment?

A: I was assigned to 11th Bomb Wing at Hickam... at that time Hickam Field, Hawaii.

Q: What was your duty?

A: I was a pilot, 2nd Lt., in a bomb squadron.

Q: What sort of plane did you fly?

A: B-18's. We were B-17's like all of the squadrons in the 11th. We were B-17's but we only had one or two per squadron. So we young guys flew the old airplanes - the B-18's.

Q: What kind of an airplane was the B-18 to fly?

A: The B-18 was a clumsy... I don't know whether... you know what the B-18 is?

Q: I've seen pictures of it.

A: Well, it's a pregnant C-47. No, it was made by Douglas at the same time they made the DC-3 and... so it had a lot of the interchangeable parts. But it was big and heavy so it was a slow airplane. I wasn't a combat airplane. It was made to be but it was obsolete when it was over here. And... but it was strictly training us pilots to be bomber pilots.

Q: What was your daily routine like in just a few weeks before December 7th, 1941?

A: Well, we're in Hawaii, so we had a great deal. We'd go to work about 7 - 7:30 in the morning and if we were assigned to fly, we'd fly. But usually, unless we had squadron duties, we were off by about 12 or 1:00 and have afternoons free. But we

worked hard and trained hard and maybe we'd fly afternoons a couple of times a week; maybe once at night every couple of...say a couple of times each two or three weeks. Go ahead...

Q: What were you doing on the morning of December 7th, 1941?

A: You're going to edit this I hope, so I'll take you to the first (laughter). As officers, at Hickam, the Club was the cheapest thing and the thing we usually did. We had to wear a tux to get in after 5:00. So naturally a weekend like that was a big party back then. So I'd been to the Club with my white tux and I had a date (a nurse), and my roommate had a date with another nurse.

We started at the Club but we ended up out here in the pineapple field someplace (laughter) just goofing off. We got home about 1:00; we took the girls home and we went on up. I don't mean to make this something nasty or anything. I mean, it was just a regular date, but we did drink a lot that night. So what you want to know is what we did the night before, or you want me to go ahead with my War stories?

Q: Well, lead up into it.

A: Uh, O.K., so we went to bed. I just dumped my tux out in the middle of the floor and this terrible shaking you know, woke me up, and I thought, "What the hell's going on!" and my quarter... Are you familiar with Hickam?

Q: In a general sort of way.

A: My... you know where the Club is?

Q: Right.

A: My quarters were the first building on Signor(?) you know, right on the road that runs into the Club; right there almost to the Club. So our back was right on the flight line. My back window of my bedroom was on the flight line.

I looked out and this airplane was going up in the air, you know... I mean exploding, and it was a B-24 that was on a world trip. They'd hit it. And my roommate and I both looked out the window and we were a little groggy you know. "What in the hell! The damn Navy's been out here. They're bombing us!" (you know.. Navy) and they... one of them hit the ground is what we first thought.

Then we saw these other airplanes coming up. They were Zeroes in what they were. But we didn't know it at that time. And this fog... what in the world are the British doing over here with Spitfires! Finally we said, "Hey, that's the damn Japs!" And we stood there and shook hands and said, "We'll whip them in about three months." (laughter)

But, so this destruction was out on the line. Naturally they were hitting it pretty hard. We jumped in our clothes and ran down to the flight line which was our orders. And so, we... the B-17's had all been destroyed (ours had been). They were just burning.

But we jumped into the old B-18's and taxied them across a rebutment or something. And I says, "Hey, I'm checked out now." I hadn't been checked out as the first pilot, just brand new 2nd John. "Well I'm checked out now." I took that old thing; it had one flat tire on it and it had been hit. The seat I was sitting in had been hit by some small, like a .35 mm... I mean about a .20 mm or something. And uh, I dispersed it.

We went back to our hangars and we watched the show. This is something I've been scared many times in my life, but I was never frightened that day. Evidently my adrenalin was so high and all of us were like a bunch of tourists.

We'd see them, if a Zero or something come over here and he pointed at us, we'd jump down to the floor and hide and then when he'd gone we'd go out there and gawk some more. And then when the high altitude bombers on the second... see, they hit early and they hit on a second deal. We could see them up there. They were 18, 20,000; at that time I couldn't have told you but I happened to have read it. We could see the bombs leaving the bomb base and as soon as they did that, we'd all go charging back in there and hide in the counter someplace. We could hear the bombs start hitting...BAM, BAM, BAM. And when they'd pass us we'd jump up and start looking again (laughter)... crazy thing!

Q: So what did you do when the attack was over?

A: Well, we gathered around and looked at the pieces and really, we didn't have any airplanes, so we stayed there the rest of the day... or most of the rest of the day.

And then later on, I mean things were rather disorganized obviously, but the next day they put me out in the periphery of the base and we had... ground security and I stayed outdoors about three days or so, in charge of a group of machine guns and things like that, in case we were attacked.

Q: During the attack, did you see anybody shooting back at the airplane.

A: Uh, they shot back but it was a silly deal because I mean here they were just firing away with .30 calibers and you couldn't hit anything with them. Now I saw... no I take that back, because somebody, somewhere, one of the Zeroes came over smoking like hell and hit over at Fort [Kamehameha]. You probably read about that one. Yeah, I saw that one. And see, our bombers from the states were landing at that time. You're familiar with that; part of the 19th Group. Our people had gone over, some of them, to pick up airplanes. But the 19th Group is the ones we saw land. They tried to land and one landed down wind and we blew the tires, because he was going like hell with Japs right on his tail (Zeroes) you know.

I saw one airplane try to get off. I'm jumping around now, but you can figure there... One B-17 and Al Stewart(?), (I don't know whether you've heard his name yet or not.) He was our squadron commander the 26th later on and was killed at Guadalcanal. But he tried to get an airplane off but he just picked up a co-pilot, and while he was making his run, trying to get off, the co-pilot, instead of locking the tail wheel, locked

the controls and so the airplane was really out of control and he went charging down... kind of wrecked the airplane.

Nearest I saw to anybody getting off on it, but...

Q: Was that a B-17 or

A: Yeah, B-17. But, uh... yeah, I'll have to wait for a question.

Q: Well, I think you've covered just about, you know, anything that I had to ask. Things must have been pretty tense right after the attack. A lot of rumors and that sort of thing?

A: Yeah, uh... the days following it weren't exciting but I can't remember what I did really. When we got organized, (as I say, we had no airplanes) well it just almost that time, they sent my squadron up to Wheeler Field and that was ours until the Battle of Midway, when... after Battle of Midway, well then, we went south. But we weren't at Hickam anymore after just a weeks after the War started.

Q: Well, what did you do in the Battle of Midway?

A: Oh, hell, B-17's, I'll start out with, you know, we had gone through the thing, we can drop them down a pickle barrel and all that. As a matter of fact, it wasn't only Midway, but it was all through Guadalcanal and so forth. We couldn't hit a moving... by the time we'd dropped our bomb, the ships were out of the way. So we never got any hits. We bombed them at Midway.

Now what did I do at Midway? I was out there (I was co-pilot now) and our crew was out there with several others before Midway, a week before.

Q: Did you have B-17's then?

A: B-17'... B-17E, we'd got new airplanes from the states. And...they alert us, but we were using too much gas. So they sent us, by say four or five airplanes which I was one. They sent us back to Hawaii to wait.

But the amazing thing, and I don't suppose this is classified, because it's been published since then, but an Admiral sat us down out in the bunk (this was five days or so before Midway.) So as the Japs are coming, well of course, they had the purple V(??) on it and all that, at that time. Of course I wouldn't have known that. That is just hind sight ... thinking back.

But they sent us back to Hawaii, and when they hit Dutch Harbor, I was sitting in the Waikiki Theater, with my now wife, and it came on the screen. We immediately went out, cranked up , and went back to Midway. So we missed the first... where the Japs get Midway first, we weren't there. But then we went out looking for them and so I'll quote you my part in the battle. It's written up in several of the books, (uh... Miracle at Midway, and so forth) so..."But the battle wasn't over," it says, "One group of B-17's came back, reported they had dropped bombs on a Japanese Cruiser. He sank within 15 seconds." And it comes back to say, That was a miracle, but it would have been more of a

miracle to watch that same cruiser come back to the surface!

We bombed the cruiser, uh, Grayling... I mean the uh, American submarine Grayling and we shot him up. We bent him up pretty well (laughter) and we later on met him back at the Royal Hawaiian and had parties with him. But... and they were lost a little later than that. But they were our buddies but we weren't their buddies then.

But the B-17 was not made to bomb ships and we did it. I was at the Battle of Santa Cruz. We had them had them lines up. We dropped fine... hadn't hit a goddamn thing. But they should have used us for reconnaissance because the PBY's couldn't handle it and at Guadalcanal, the Zeros, (and I've read this later and I thought so at the time) we could more than handle them with the B-17's; just one B-17 against two or three of them. They knocked down some of our B-17's but in general we more than carried our own with them.

Q: Was the later models with the heavier armament the E?

A: We had the E. You mean the later models, the B-17?

Q: E's and later.

A: Well, we had the E's all through that yeah. The E's were the first to have tail guns you know. Well, no... yeah, yeah, a tail gun.

Q: O.K., thank you very much.

A: Well, I'm glad to do it. You're with the Park Service.

Q: Right.